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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 2006

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TAKE A DEEP BREATH THE AV HAS ITS CLEANEST AIR IN 7 YEARS

Lancaster – The AVAQMD motto “It’s a breath of fresh air,” was right on target this summer as Antelope Valley residents breathed the cleanest air in seven years. During the 2006 summer sizzle, the AVAQMD recorded only 16 days when ozone levels exceeded federal health standards within its boundaries, and 22 days when ozone levels surpassed state standards, the fewest unhealthful air days since 1999.

The current federal ozone standard, which was enacted in 1998, dictates that ozone readings averaged over an eight-hour period should not exceed 0.08 ppm.

Considering the extremely hot temperatures this summer, those numbers represented a positive sign, according to AVAQMD Executive Director Eldon Heaston. “Our ozone season in the Antelope Valley normally runs from May to mid-October. Last year by this time, 31 days had exceeded the federal standard,” he stated.

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High ozone days are linked to hot days when nitrogen oxides and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's) combine in the heat of the sun and "cook" together to form ozone. This year, the ozone season was cut short due to cooler temperatures in October.

Most of the Antelope Valley's air pollution is not locally generated. It is wind-blown in from the Los Angeles area. The AV is most likely to experience elevated levels of ozone on days when an inversion layer settles over the Los Angeles Basin, then gives up its pollutants to a breeze that blows them into the desert. "We also get wind-blown pollution from the San Joaquin Valley. This year, the wind patterns were different and we didn't get directly hit from San Joaquin. The wind blew pollution away from us instead of toward us," stated Heaston.

"We all do everything we can to reduce air pollution – drive cleaner cars, take the bus – but ultimately a lot of it has to do with which way the wind blows," added Heaston.

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